

White Flint coming to vote

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By Paige L. Hill

Montgomery County Council members could vote on a funding plan for the White Flint development plan as soon as next week, according to Councilman Mike Knapp (D-Dist. 2), who chairs the county's Planning, Housing and Education Committee.

The council is scheduled to possibly vote on a current proposal for White Flint that calls for a special taxing district to be put in place to help fund the \$1.1 billion needed to construct public amenities like roads and sidewalks. Some council members, such as Council Vice President Valerie Ervin (D-Dist. 2) remained hesitant to support a plan that could affect other future development projects, like those in her district in Silver Spring.

"I'm very concerned what kind of precedent we are setting," Ervin said.

The development plan, which is expected to take up to 30 to 40 years to implement, will add around 9,800 residents to the White Flint area, along with 2,600 affordable housing units. The development will cover about 480 acres of land surrounding the White Flint Metro Station and will be focused on creating more mass public transit and allowing residents and workers to leave their vehicles at home. Many older commercial buildings will be replaced over time with larger mixed-use facilities, some of them 30 stories tall.

County Executive Isiah "Ike" Leggett (D) debuted a funding proposal last month that imposed an additional 10 percent property tax for property owners within a mile of the White Flint Metro Station and a tax on transportation impact on the area. Financial analysts from Leggett's office estimated the county could reap \$208 million in tax revenues and impact fees from the city over the next 40 years if Leggett's proposal was adopted. But at last week's meeting, Leggett's office issued a new proposal that dismissed those taxes and instead promoted a funding plan based on county issuing bonds based on future tax revenue.

In a letter dated Nov. 5, Councilman Roger Berliner (D-Dist. 1) wrote that Leggett was "not making a real commitment" to funding White Flint, pointing out the fact that the project would need funding before the taxes would be collected. The project is located in Berliner's district — the area is bounded by Rockville Pike and Montrose and Randolph roads in North Bethesda. But during the county council's most recent hearing on White Flint, Berliner said he supports the county executive's revised plan.

"This is something I can get behind," Berliner said.

Leggett's latest plan also decreases the amount of money pulled from the White Flint fund from \$414 million to \$376 million by eliminating \$130.5 million in bus depot construction — under the proposal, that financial obligation would be shifted to another portion of the county's overall budget.